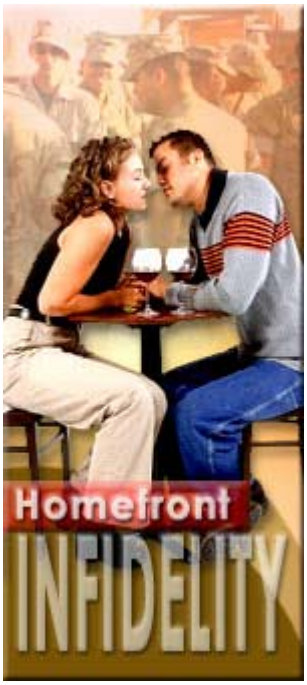
Couples Company.com

INFIDELITY ON THE HOMEFRONT

WHILE HE'S ON THE FRONTLINES



Dear Couples Company:

I met my husband at work last year. We spent a while as friends then decided to date. Not too long after that we were married. We have a wonderful relationship. He's not only my husband but my best friend. We do everything together and never keep any secrets until now.

My husband left for the army and will be gone for almost a year. When he left I stopped eating, sleeping, or even functioning. That went on for about a month or so. Then a girlfriend and I decided to hang out with some (M) friends of ours (one being an ex of mine). Nothing happened the first couple of times we went out, but not soon after seeing him again we had sex.

I love my husband more than anything in this world and I don't understand how I let myself do this to him. He means so much to me and I would never do anything to mess up our relationship, but since he's been gone I drink a lot and are depressed. The cheating only happened one time (like that isn't enough). I constantly justify what I have done with the fact that he left me regardless whether it was for a job or not. I never wanted him to join the military anyway. I keep trying to stay angry at him for leaving me so I won't be so sad. This is eating away at me. Can you please help? What's wrong with me? Should I tell him what I've done?

Sarah (F) 18
New Castle, USA

Dear Sarah:

Obviously the guilt is eating at you. This is normal. You did break your marriage vows and you did commit adultery. The good news is, you never have to do it again.

In answer to your question, "What's wrong with me?" There is nothing wrong with you; you want companionship just as everyone else does. You are angry at your husband for leaving, even if it is for the army and he has no choice. This doesn't make what you did right. It does make you human. It would be worrisome if you were not disturbed by this.

Lets look at reality.

Copyright © 2003 Couples Company
All Rights Reserved
http://www.couplescompany.com/Advice/Joan/112003.htm

The fact is he did not leave you. Rather he honored his commitment and kept his word. He was not leaving you. Feeling sorry for yourself over this and blaming him is not constructive, nor is it fair. You knew when you married him that this might be a possibility and marriage vows do state "for better or for worse." Think of it as getting "the worse" out of the way first.

Reassessing your attitude will also require you focus on your internal dialogue. Saying "He left me" is an excuse worthy of a twelve-year-old who has yet to develop the cognitive skills necessary to discern action and consequence, not an adult woman. This was a circumstance beyond his control and rather than acknowledge that, you are using it as an excuse for your own behavior. He did not hold a gun to your head and force you to cheat. You made that decision on your own and of your own volition. You need to take full accountability for that first, before you will ever be able to move past this.

Once you are ready to acknowledge this is *entirely* your issue and has nothing to do with him or the circumstances, you can begin to fix the situation. This is what we suggest:

DO FIND A SUPPORT GROUP. You are not the only women in this position and surrounding yourself with other women and activities will help the time go by faster and give you a purpose. With a purpose and something to focus on that is positive and engages your energies, you will be less likely to wander in your affections. You're are fortunate. As a military spouse the government makes available many resources for you. You also might try befriending another military wife in her 40's or 50's who has been through this and can act as a mentor, confidant, second mother and guide.

GO TO COLLEGE OR A TRADE SCHOOL: You're eighteen with your whole life ahead of you and no children. Now is the best time possible for you to begin going to school. Plus it will give you something to focus on besides the fact that you miss him.

DO TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN NEEDS. Sexual satisfaction is important and great stress reliever. Learn to pleasure yourself before you go out with friends. Many single women do this to take the edge off a date or when they know they will be in a situation that could escalate sexually. Couples Company carries sexual aids for women in our Love Games shop you can order and have delivered discreetly. No one but you needs to know.

DO NOT GO OUT WITH EX-BOYFRIENDS. It is far too easy to return to what is comfortable and ex's provide the convenient excuse of not being someone you just picked up or started a new relationship with. If you walk into a room or party where an ex is, leave. Same goes for male friends. Do not go out alone with male friends. It sounds arcane but always bring a chaperone (girlfriend) with you to keep the relationship in perspective. The temptation is very strong when you feel lonely.

ALTERNATE ALCOHOL WITH NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES. Since you're under age, (18) it is against the law to drink anyway. You know this. Once you turn 21, these are the guidelines.

Copyright © 2003 Couples Company
All Rights Reserved
http://www.couplescompany.com/Advice/Joan/112003.htm

Alcohol is a depressant and it lowers inhibitions. Single women dating will often have one or two drinks and switch to coffee or tea and then alternate to prevent themselves from ending up in compromising positions. Remember the average female can only drink one serving of alcohol each hour before she becomes inebriated. You don't have to not drink, just be responsible when you do and you will avoid many potentially compromising situations.

DO NOT TELL HIM WHAT YOU DID. Men do not handle infidelity the same way women do. If you tell him, it is for your own absolution and it will only hurt him. You made a mistake. You are paying a high price for it; don't make him pay for it too. Telling him will not make it better. Rather tell him, you fantasized about him while you self-pleasured! Tell him you love him and above all, honor him by never doing it again.

Dr. Joan

Laura Dawn Lewis contributed to this article

Copyright © 2003 Couples Company
All Rights Reserved
http://www.couplescompany.com/Advice/Joan/112003.htm